

# The only text messaging not banned from the classroom

An innovative SMS project at a south west London college is using 21st century technology to keep tabs on students' attendance records.

At the start of each science degree lesson at Kingston College, the lecturer gives the students a specific lesson code to text to a dedicated number. Registration takes place automatically and without fuss.

"We read the class ID from the texted code, identify the student from their mobile number and the time from the text message itself," says David Robinson, Head Of Learning Information Services.

"Our server then determines the student is present for the lesson and marks the register accordingly."

The secure SMS service was launched thanks to a joint venture between PageOne Communications and JANET(UK).

In May 2007, JANET(UK) selected PageOne to operate the service, allowing educational and research organisations to distribute individual or group messaging to mobiles, landlines, email and pagers through one easy-to-use interface.

"We won funding for a joint JANET txt project with Kingston University, as we share the same students for

some of our courses. There are inevitably issues about managing students across two institutions, so it's great to use mobile technology to keep lecturers and students up to date," says David.

"When we started there were a few technical challenges but we've mastered them thanks to excellent technical support from PageOne and proved that it works. We now have a dedicated SOAP (Simple Object Access Protocol) server which has helped to streamline the process.

"Students move between courses fairly frequently, especially at the beginning of each term, so a traditional paper register isn't very practical.

"There are still a few issues to overcome – for example if a student changes their SIM card and doesn't tell us – but generally it's succeeded in transferring a bureaucratic burden from teachers to machines."

The development in SMS-based registration was undertaken as part of a JISC-funded project called KASTANET (Kingston Access to Science Teaching Across New and Emerging Technologies), which is

led by Kingston College in collaboration with Kingston University.

"Text messaging has succeeded in transferring a bureaucratic burden from teachers to machines."

- Registering students at the start of lessons was an administrative chore
- The introduction of text message registration means it takes students just moments to register
- The process now frees up lecturers to concentrate on teaching

For further information call now on: **0844 822 5100**

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<http://www.pageone.co.uk/JANETtxt>

